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Home Visit Safety Policy and Procedure

Listed below is guidance regarding ways to stay safe and tips on what to do when feeling unsafe.

Although it is not common for home visitors to find themselves in a situation they perceive as threatening, it is important for them to be cautious. The populations that home visitors serve are diverse and safety will vary. There are, however, several basic safety guidelines and precautions that are applicable to all Child and Family Development staff.

1. It is a priority for home visitors to use common sense and trust their judgement.

* If home visitors feel uncomfortable when they arrive to a visit or during a visit, they should assess the immediate situation and leave if they consider themselves in danger. Examples of situations that may require leaving include violence in the home, drug use, and drug dealing or the presence of intoxication or out of control individuals.
* Home visitors should excuse themselves as politely as possible, explaining to the caregiver they cannot stay, and they will contact them later to arrange another time for the home visit.
* Home visitors should then report the incident to their supervisor and record the reason for the visit cancellation in writing (EHS HB would note in Attendance on Child Plus). The home visitor should record what happened, such as: “Parent’s/guardian’s speech was slurred and they were using language I have never heard them use before.”
* When the home visitor and parent(s)/guardian(s) discuss the situation later, it should be done in a nonjudgmental manner. The home visitor was unable to work with the parent that day as home visits require everyone’s attention and participation, the home visitor thought that it would be better to return another day. Supervisors and/or coaches will support this process as needed.

1. Home visitors will develop a safety plan documented in Child Plus with their supervisor and/or coach prior to visiting the family again on their own.

* If the pattern is repeated, or there is a great deal of concern about future safety, the home visitor should request a program staffing with their supervisor and/or coach, with a manager present. At this time, a plan will be developed to meet with the family to establish reasonable safe conditions or a re-evaluation of a families’ enrollment status will be made.
* Designated staff at the home visitor’s office or Head Start center should be aware of the home visitor’s schedule for the day and the ability to contact a home visitor while they are away. All home visits should be documented within the home visitor’s Outlook calendar.
* If necessary, a home visit “team” can visit the family on a regular basis. This arrangement must be approved by supervisory staff.

1. Supporting safe home visit is knowing the neighborhood where the visits are taking place.

* Family members you are visiting can help home visitors learn the safest routes (and safest times) for them to visit.
* Maintaining your automobile in good condition is a necessary safety precaution, especially for those that travel long distances, for those who travel in remote rural areas and for those who travel in remote rural areas and for those who travel through potentially dangerous neighborhoods.

Home visitors should use common sense and trust their judgement, try to prevent dangerous situations from developing and keep supervisory staff aware of the conditions under which they are visiting. When personal safety is involved, home visitors must advocate for themselves – sharing concern with their supervisors, telling parents when they are uneasy, leaving a place that they perceive to be unsafe.

8/23 EHS-HS Teams/Procedural Manual/Safety/Active Supervision